DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 275 EC 111 760

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TITLE Mainstreaming: International Perspectives.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the World Congress on Future Special Education (First, Stirling, Scotland, June 25 - July 1, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education; Conceptual Schemes; Delivery Systems; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foreign Countries; *Handicapped Children; *Mainstreaming; *Models; Resource Room Programs

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ABSTRACT

Various nations have established legislation and/or developed policy to integrate mentally and physically handicapped students into the mainstream of ordinary schooling. The authors discuss four strategies used by different countries to effect mainstreaming. Examined are: the Resource Room Model from the United States, the Educational Pairing Model from Denmark, the Consultant Teacher Model from Norway and the Combined Services Model from Poland. It is held that the ultimate plan for integration of the handicapped has yet to be devised and that the concept of mainstreaming can be aided by the concept of networking to facilitate world-wide data exchange.

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Mainstreaming is no longer a matter of philosophical speculation. Several nations across the world have passed legislation to integrate special education and regular schooling. The language of these several legislative acts varies in form, length and elegance. A common theme, however, is clearly evident; the handicapped have an inalienable right to a full education, and such education shall be, insofar as possible, free of restrictions which might prevent handicapped students from interaction with and participation in the same socio-cultural environment as that of non-handicapped students. For education and for allied professional disciplines, mainstreaming is a matter of fact.

Background

Residing on our planet are 400 million mentally and physically handicapped persons. Twenty-five percent of these exceptional persons are citizens of developed nations. The vast majority, 75%, live in developing countries. More than 130 nations of the world are providing, within the limits of their resources, programs for handicapped persons. In the more affluent nations programs may be quite sophisticated, in impoverished nations programs may be minimal at best (Sundberg, 1976). Growth of special education programs has taken place largely during the last century; the most significant progress occuring during the years since World War II (UNESCO, 1969).

Until recently, special education programs have been characterized generally by relatively small instructional groups, differentiated according to constituent students who had received a common medical or psychological diagnostic classification and who were segregated from regular classes for instruction. The training of teachers of these classes of exceptional students ranged from zero (no more training than that of the regular classroom teacher) to perhaps one academic year of specialized training. Education of exceptional students conducted in special classes segregated from ordinary schooling has been, according to Krupski (1978), "...at worst,detrimental to mildly handicapped youngsters and, at best, not demonstrably helpful (p.1.)". Evidence as to benefit or harm to severely handicapped students is less certain, although few studies have addressed themselves to that question.

Change Process Dysfunction

The rapid evolution of mainstreaming has resulted in dysfunction of the orderly change processes and mechanisms which are needed to facilitate implementation of this concept. Educators and allied professionals are bewildered.

How is it possible to deal with a movement which seemingly reverses years of constructive efforts on behalf of exceptional individuals in favor of an apparently reactionary program which returns handicapped learners to classrooms in which they were previously doomed to failure? Contributing to this professional scepticism are some of the following:

1. Reassignment of exceptional students from special to regular classrooms has often not been on the basis of educational, medical

or psychological evidence but rather the result of litigation and/or legislative mandate.

2. There has been insufficient lead-time to "tool-up" for necessary changes. Innovative strategies must be developed after the fact.

3. There is a paucity of relevant research from either the laboratory or the field. Few experimental programs have been subjected to careful scrutiny or appropriate evaluative techniques, and thus have limited generalisability to world-wide populations.

4. Effective communication among the stakeholders tends to be lacking. Those affected by mainstreaming (exceptional individuals, their parents, educators, psychologists, etc.) are projecting their feelings of frustration toward each other. Personal and professional defensiveness is getting in the way of meaningful exchange.

5. Groups with a vested interest in mainstreaming are also cognizant they are risking their benefits under the present arrangement. As examples:

   5.1 for exceptional individuals - During this century we have become "special". Is a special categorical identity better than no identity in the mainstream?

   5.2 for parents of exceptional individuals - Our children are receiving special care and help now. Will mainstreaming be regressive, a return to the failures of the past?

   5.3 for parents of non-exceptional individuals - Our children have enough trouble getting the teacher's attention. Will mainstreaming only compound already over-burdened classrooms?

   5.4 for teachers of exceptional individuals - We have developed a professional expertise and identity. With mainstreaming, what will happen to our locus of control over a niche in the system?

   5.5 for teachers of non-exceptional individuals - We do not have the specialized training necessary to teach handicapped students. We must resist mainstreaming rather than do possible injury to these unique children.

6. Mainstreaming creates a need for major organizational change which is the most difficult to effect.

Solutions to this multitude of problems will take time, money and ingenuity, three precious commodities which are in short supply as the press for mainstreaming reaches crisis proportions.

Four Strategies

Various nations are seeking to reduce the distinction made between regular education and the education of exceptional individuals. This paper will examine four thrusts which have been made in the area of program design. These four program models have been assigned an exclusivity of strategy which is, to a degree, inaccurate. The purpose in doing so was twofold:

1. It was license taken in an effort to dramatize differences. While elements of each program model may be seen in several nations, overall strategic approaches do differ; perhaps as a consequence of the language of legislation or administrative policy; perhaps as a consequence of context level of the culture.

2. It was a technique to demonstrate, through an emphasis upon differences, the reality of the kinship of educators in all nations as they strive to integrate the handicapped.

The Resource Room Model (America/California)

In the United States, integration of the handicapped has been mandated by The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (U.S.A. P.L.-94-142,1975). This significant social legislation stipulates broad services to exceptional individuals through a complex delivery system.

Historically in California, and elsewhere in the United States, a popular strategy for integrating the handicapped has been the Resource Room Model. This facility provided an in-school agency to advocate and educate the exceptional pupil. Existence of resource rooms prior to The Education for All Handicapped Children Act together with the subsequent comprehensive requirements of this legislation tended to legitimize the Resource Room Model as the strategy of choice for implementing mainstreaming.

In America the exceptional individual now belongs to the regular classroom unless it can be demonstrated that, in part or in whole, such placement will not meet her/his special needs. Through the resource room appropriateness of education is to be attained.

Combinations of regular and special educational services are to be designed as to meet the needs of handicapped learners as adequately as the needs of nonhandicapped learners are met. In the resource room, which is under the direction of a trained resource specialist, exceptional pupils receive on-site education assessment. Diagnostic findings, for example, may indicate return to the regular classroom with special-aids and materials, short-term remediation within the resource room and/or assignment to the nearest specialized off-site setting. In all instances, the concern of the resource specialist will be for the least restrictive placement and the earliest, most appropriate return of the handicapped learner to the regular classroom environment. Additional responsibilities of the resource specialist include but are not limited to:

1. acting as the agent of organizational-charge to bring the educational agency from segregation to integration of the handicapped.

2. directing child-find activities.

3. providing leadership to multidisciplinary support teams.

4. maintaining liaison with families of exceptional individuals.

5. developing and conducting in service training programs for professionals in regular education.

America's hopes for success in its mainstreaming venture weigh heavily upon the resource room model. To accomplish the objective of the Education for All Handcapped Children Act, the resource specialist will need to be something of a wizard, exhibiting expertise in a multiplicity of fields. This necessity may, to a degree, explain the high "burn-out" rate for resource specialists which has been reported in pilot programs.

The educational pairing model (Denmark)

Since 1969 the nation of Denmark has worked methodically to achieve a coherent system of regular and special education. According to Jørgensen (1976), "The aim of special education is to enable pupils as far as possible to resume participation in ordinary forms of education according to the curriculum (p.13)." At the present time, 12.5% of enrolled Danish children receive some form of special education; 8.75% receive their instruction in regular classrooms with additional support in the form of personalized teaching aids or supplementary short-term special education; 3.75% are educated in special classes or special schools (Jørgensen, 1978).

To reduce further the potential isolation and segregation of placement in special class or special school, the Danish Ministry of Education, Special Education Section has developed a plan which features educational pairings of classes and schools (Jørgensen, 1978). In this scheme a special class is paired architecturally with an ordinary class. The regular teacher and the special teacher share responsibilities for each others class and for each others students. Special students may flow easily into the regular class at varying times for appropriate lessons. Regular students may assist in the special classroom. Administration is required "to ensure the greatest possible interaction between the pupils and teachers in the special classes and those in the ordinary school (p.1)". In a variation of the scheme to pair regular and special classrooms, Denmark now requires the pairing of ordinary schools and special schools, a concept referred to as the "twin school principle (p.2)". This plan requires each special school to be attached to an ordinary school through the sharing of common facilities. While specific forms of interaction between school personnel, both pupil and professional, are not mandated, it is expected such pairing may create and extended educational environment which will result in exchanges similar to those of the paired-class program.

The Consultant Teacher Model (Norway)

Like her sister nation to the south, during the last decade Norway has sought to lessen the disparity between regular and special education. To achieve an integration of the handicapped, Norway is allocating her resources along two fronts: (1) to enlarge the number of trained special education specialists within the system of ordinary schools, and (2) to provide very teacher of regular classes basic training in the education and psychology of exceptional learners in order to assure nominal competence on the part of all educators to be able to effect mainstreaming (Skrindo, 1978). To connect these two effors, school systems within Norway are utilizing a strategy termed in this paper, the consultant teacher model.

This plan builds upon provisions in law (Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education, 1975) which state:

1. For pupils in the basic school who after assessment by experts are judged to require particular help, special education shall be

> organized, either within of outside school. Such education may be given in the ordinary school or in separate schools or in special classes or in medical or social institutions, etc. (p.9).

Keystone to this model is an highly qualified consultant teacher(ct). The ct is the exceptional child's advocate, the facilitator of mainstreaming and the bridge between regular and special schooling. Consultant teachers are based in either regular schools or special schools and work in conjunction with multidisciplinary assessment teams which are assigned to a school or schools. When based in the regular school setting, the ct provides psychoeducational services to keep each exceptional child in her/his case load integrated into the milieu of the ordinary school. When based in a special school setting, the ct provides psychoeducational services to place mainstreamable exceptional children into the milieu of the ordinary school together with follow-up services to keep them there. The consultant teacher is part teacher, part counselor, part social worker and full-time tightrope walker over chasms of pupil and teacher resistance, school politics and faculty room intrigue in settings where competition is keen for dwindling resources. Additionally, cts must accomplish their respective missions while moving in and out of each others respective school plants and exhibit no chauvinism on behalf of their own home base. Moreover, consultant teachers must remember they represent the handicapped student. The pressure, however, is always with them to set aside such dedication and to become a team player for the system of the status quo rather than a change agent for mainstreaming.

The Combined Services Model (Poland)

When viewed from the perspective of those several nations oft referred to as the Eastern Block, the concept of integration of the handicapped is difficult for the Western observer to discern. These nations have tended to apply principles and programs utilized by the U.S.S.R., which is held to be the first nation to establish a socialist society. In terms of special education, exceptional individuals receive their schooling in separate institutions (often residential) which are organized around a particular diagnostic category -- or defect. Thus, those diagnosed as mentally retarded will attend special schools for the mentally retarded -- the blind special schools for the blind -- the deaf special schools for the deaf, etc. This is not, however, seen as segregation.

It must be remembered that in a socialist country the society is seen as integrated. Each person and each structure under which persons may be organized in a socialist nation has a common purpose -- a common goal. They are to be non-competitive and without class distinction. The existence of special institutes or separate schools for exceptional individuals is in no way believed to be disintegrative or segregated. Each handicapped pupil, each special school is held to be a part of the collective wholeness and oneness of the society. In fact, the concept of mainstreaming is seen as contrary to socialist thinking and a plan which would tend to place vulnerable children in situations of personal and social failure.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the nation of Poland is seeking to improve delivery aspects of its programs for handicapped persons. The concern is for efficacy of services. The integration sought is at the level of services; a desire to provide improved and more extensive specialized services through agency coordination. In commenting on a tendency for equal treatment of unequal persons, Hulek (1975) stated:

> These tendencies, however, encounter a number of obstacles, especially with regard to traditional divisions of professional responsibility and competence, which in turn have conditioned the structure and modes of operation of the institutions involved in such problems. There is, in the first place, a lack of coordination and pooling of efforts within the area of rehabilitation services as such; for instance, between the professsions and institutions offering services for the medical, social or vocational rehabilitation of the disabled on the one hand and special education on the other. The reason of this is to be sought in insufficient recognition of the fact that these various functions are joint instruments for the common goal of helping the disabled to become independent and autonomous members of society. (p.160).

Thus, the approach of Poland to further the integration of the handicapped is through realignment of the agencies providing necessary professional assistance. It is believed that better orchestration of these professional spheres will more effectively accomplish the goals inherent to socialist philosophy.

Summary and Implications

Comparisons across nations are always dangerous. They are equally inevitable. The United States, through Public Law 94 - 142, is moving swiftly into a comprehensive program of integration of the handicapped. It is elegant legislation. As a nation, America is confident of its ability to meet the challenge of mainstreaming. It acknowledges the price will be high in terms of energy -- human energy. But is any price too high to better the human condition?

Scandinavia, as manifest in Denmark and Norway, are also moving swiftly but less grandly. They prefer more subtle changes in the educational environment to allow mainstreaming to evolve -- to become what it will become.

In the socialist countries, as represented in this paper by Poland, the view is from atop the planned society. Integration of all people, to their mind, is the corner stone of socialist doctrine. Mainstreaming is a decadent concept. Refinement of existant integration for greater and greater internal harmony is their goal.

From an international perspective it is evident that the ultimate plan for the integration of all exceptional persons has yet to be formulated. Nations and educational systems within nations have much to learn from each other. It is, perhaps, essential that the concept of mainstreaming include the concept of networking to facilitate needed information exchange intra-nationally and internationally.

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